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UNCLAS LILONGWE 000149

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CABINET DISSOLVED HOURS BEFORE ALLIANCE MOU
FORMALIZED

1. (U) Hours before signing a ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) and Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) MOU to jointly contest May's elections, President Muluzi dissolved the Cabinet on February 23. No reason was given for the dissolution, and the Office of President and Cabinet (OPC) has requested that all matters requiring ministerial attention be addressed to the State House.

COMMENT

2. (SBU) Considering the many concessions AFORD is making by signing the MOU (supporting both UDF's presidential candidate and running mate, and fielding candidates in only 38 of 193 parliamentary districts), it is possible that Muluzi dissolved the Cabinet as a gesture of good faith to AFORD. With a signed MOU in hand, we would not be surprised if Muluzi's next Cabinet has several new AFORD faces. In handing out new Cabinet assignments, Muluzi will also have the opportunity to remove UDF ministers whose support for the party has not been hard-line enough. END COMMENT.
BROWNING